

I. Introduction

Good morning! Praise the Lord! Last week, we saw how Jesus fasted and prayed and how He faced the devil in the wilderness. Jesus was tired and hungry, but He refused to compromise His mission. Jesus would not settle for bringing temporary worldly comfort; He was determined to go to the cross to prepare eternal salvation from sin and death for all who believe. From Jesus' example we can learn a lot about how to resist the temptations of the devil and about how to keep our eyes fixed on the eternal things of the Kingdom of God. Today, as we continue our study in Luke, we will see Jesus announce His mission to the people of Nazareth and we will see their reaction as well. Let's begin by reading Luke 4:14-22.

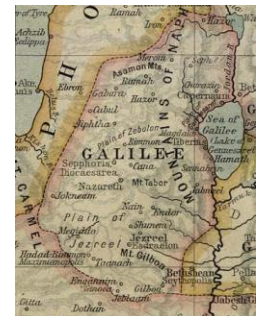


II. Scripture Luke 4:14-22 (NIV)

[14] Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. [15] He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. [16] He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. [17] The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: [18] "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, [19] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." [20] Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, [21] and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." [22] All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

III. Teaching

Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned from being tested in the desert and began to preach throughout Galilee. **Luke 4:15** say, **"He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him."** When we compare the four gospels, it seems that this verse covers several months during which Jesus went from town to town preaching throughout Galilee. Jesus began to have a reputation as a powerful preacher and a worker of miracles.



Nearly every town had at least one synagogue and some of the larger cities had many synagogues. Visiting preachers were often given a chance to speak, so it was probably easy for Jesus to speak in each town He visited. This synagogue in Baram might have been one of unnamed places where Jesus preached.



We do not know whether Jesus preached from Isaiah 61 in other towns, but in Nazareth He spoke from Isaiah 61:1-2, but He stopped part way through verse 2. **(Isaiah 61:1-2), "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn."** Jesus was reading this, but He stopped before reading the last part that says, **"and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn."**

Why did Jesus stop where He did? Probably because this is where Isaiah transitions from prophesying about the Messiah's first coming to talking about the second coming. Jesus read the part about His first coming and then stopped. His first coming brings the, **"year of the Lord's favor,"** which is not a literal year, but is instead the whole time when the Good News of salvation is being preached. When the **"year of the**

Lord's favor," ends, Jesus will come again and there will be a day of judgment and comfort for all who mourn. In effect, Jesus inserted a pause in the prophecy which so far has lasted for almost 2,000 years. We are still living in, **"the year of the Lord's favor,"** the time when the Good News of salvation is being preached.

By quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 and stopping where He did, Jesus declared that the mission of His first coming was to bring Good News, freedom, healing, and liberation. All of these things can be physical, but these things are also spiritual, and Jesus' main mission was in providing for our spiritual needs. Before we trust in Jesus, we are oppressed by evil, blind to spiritual truth, chained by sin and death, and living in spiritual poverty. But when we believe in Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit, then we receive the riches of the promises of God, our eyes are opened to the truth, we are set free from sin and death, and we are protected from evil by God and His angels. Jesus is Good News for all who believe. The time of judgment will come, but it is not now. Now is the, **"year of the Lord's favor."**

In **Leviticus 25:10**, it says, **"Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan."** In the Law of Moses, every debt was forgiven, and every slave was set free every fiftieth year. It was a new beginning for all. The mistakes of the past were erased and all things were restored. The year of jubilee was the, "year of the Lord's favor." Even if someone had lost their inheritance and sold themselves into slavery, there was still hope. Because when the year of jubilee came, they would be free again and their land would be restored to them at no cost.

Can you imagine the joy of the jubilee? Imagine for a moment that you had lost everything. Just so you and they would have food to eat, you sold yourself and your family into slavery. Your wife, your son, your daughter, and you yourself all sold to different owners and the family broken up. Years passed as you labored as a slave, far away from all your family and friends. Then, one day, you hear the sound of a trumpet (ram's horn). The year of jubilee, the time of restoration has come! You stand up straight and leave the bitter labor of a slave. You go home to the land of your father and your father's house. It is restored to you, because it is the year of the Lord's favor, the year of jubilee. And you watch the road and soon, here comes your wife, your son, and your daughter. All of them released from their bitter labor by the grace of the year of jubilee. The family is together again, and neighbors and friends, some of whom had suffered like you, all come together and celebrate. The past is erased, you can make a new beginning; the year of jubilee has come. Such a system of law is difficult for us to imagine today, but the Law of Moses is full of these prophetic models of God's grace and of the salvation God will bring through the Messiah.



Jesus had stood up to read the Scriptures, but then He sat down to teach. Every eye was on Him as the people waited anxiously to hear His words. **(Luke 4:21-22) "and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked."** Jesus declared that the Scripture was fulfilled at the moment when He read it. It sounds a bit indirect to us, but in saying this, Jesus was declaring that He was the Messiah come to fulfill the prophecy. The people were happy and they praised Jesus, they had longed for the Messiah to come. But some asked, **"Isn't this Joseph's son?"** And Jesus knew their hearts. In a moment the people would probably ask for a miraculous sign to prove Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. Let's continue reading, Luke 4:23-30.

IV. Scripture Luke 4:23-30 (NIV)

[23] Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.' " [24] "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. [25] I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. [26] Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. [27] And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed--only Naaman the Syrian." [28] All

the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. [29] They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. [30] But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

V. Teaching

The people of Nazareth had longed for a Messiah who would free Israel from the harsh rule of the Roman Empire and who would restore power to Israel. They were not looking for a Messiah who loved all people; they wanted a Messiah who loved them and crushed their enemies. But what does Jesus speak of? Jesus reminds them of the stories of Elijah and Elisha.

This painting, *Elijah in the Wilderness*, shows a raven bringing food to Elijah. It is based on 1 Kings 17, a time when Elijah had fled into the wilderness because Ahab, a wicked king of Israel, had refused to repent of his many sins, and so Elijah's life was in danger. Elijah hid in the wilderness until the stream that he was drinking from dried up.



And then the Lord spoke to Elijah and sent him to the home of a widow in Zaraphath in the region of Sidon. The woman shared her meager food with Elijah and the prophet blessed her with miracles, multiplying her food and raising her dead son to life. This painting shows Elijah carrying the boy down the stairs to give him to his mother. The boy is alive, but he is painted with his body wrapped and decorated for burial, because he had been dead. Imagine the joy of the widow when she received her son back alive.



Take a look at this painting, it is based on 2 Kings 5 and it shows the prophet Elisha, on the right, refusing a gift of clothing from Naaman the Syrian, a wealthy man whom Elisha had healed of leprosy. Elisha had healed Naaman of leprosy, but Elisha would not accept any payment, the blessing was free. Naaman went home to his family cleansed and whole without cost.



In these stories, it was not the people of Israel who received the blessings of God and miracles; it is a widow of Sidon and Naaman the Syrian, two foreigners! What was Jesus saying to the people in Nazareth? By giving these examples, Jesus was saying that His mission was to love all people and bring healing and new life to all. Jesus was going to be Good News not only for Israel, but also for the Romans and for the whole world. And Jesus was also revealing that Nazareth, and eventually the leadership of Israel, would reject Him and refuse to listen to Him, even as they had often refused to listen to Elijah and Elisha.

This was a message the people refused to listen to. They did not want a Messiah who loved all peoples; they did not want a Messiah who blessed both them and the hated Roman soldiers. They wanted to see the enemies of Israel destroyed. And they rushed on Jesus and took Him out intending to throw Him off a cliff to kill Him. This steep hill near Nazareth is said to be the place. But **Luke 4:30** tells us, **“But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.”** And Jesus went on to preach in other places.



VI. Conclusion

In last week's message, we saw how Jesus refused to compromise His mission of bringing salvation from sin and death. Jesus would heal many people and perform many miracles along the way; but His primary mission was to go to the cross in order to set all who believe free from sin and death.



In today's message, we see that Jesus was determined to offer salvation to the people of all nations. Jesus would not be the Messiah of just the Jews; He would be the Messiah of all people, just as God had already shown in the Old Testament by blessing foreigners with miracles and grace through the prophet Elijah and Elisha. The year of the jubilee had been a Jewish custom, but now the, “year

of the Lord's favor," would be for all peoples everywhere. Of course it was for the Jews, but also it was for the Romans, for the nations, and for us today. The salvation that Jesus offers is for all people of every tribe and tongue and nation. We have all made mistakes and suffered separation from family or loved ones. We all need restoration, healing, and new life. We need a new beginning; we need a year of jubilee. Jesus offers all of these things freely to those who repent of their sins and call on His name.

As we close in prayer, let us examine our own hearts. Have we trusted in Jesus and accepted the free gift of salvation that He offers to all who believe? Do we share God's heart that this salvation would be offered to all peoples, even those that we might think of as foreigners and enemies? Are we ready to ask the Lord to bless, not only ourselves and our loved ones, but also our enemies and those who are far away? This is the heart of the Lord, to share His love and blessings with all who will accept them in faith.

Let's pray.

VII.Closing Prayer